

Mideast: A Neo-Geopolitical Game: Explaining Mideast according to Mackinder's Theory.

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Extract: In this article on the Mideast geopolitics the author analyses the underlying causes behind a changing pattern of the Mideast geopolitics. It is an attempt aiming to explain the current geopolitical situation in the Middle East region along the parallel lines of Mackinder's renowned Theory of Heartland, but it only restricts the theory to the Middle East. This theory is still up till now the only comprehensive and general theory explaining the global strategy. The eminent lecturer and British MP, Halford J. Mackinder, was born in 1861 and was a geographer by training. In 1904, he wrote an article that changed how politicians and military strategists viewed the world. This theory was wielded by both warring parties during the World Wars I and II to vindicate their war goals as well as their military strategies. Finally, the author concludes that Arabian Peninsula represents the Mideast Heartland while the remaining Mideast landmass is considered the Mideast Island.

The U.S. Admiral Alfred Mahan was the first to use the "Middle East," term in 1902, while highlighting the British marine strategy in the face of the Russian activity

in Iran. He also applied the same term while discussing the German project which targeted then establishing a railway linking Berlin to Baghdad. Mahan wielded this term to denote a region which has its center located in the Arab Gulf where the terms of the "Near East," or "The Far East," cannot be applied to it. Moreover, the conclusion of Entente Cordiale between France and Britain in 1904 was a milestone event on the path leading to the formation of the modern Middle East in 1922. Further, in 1911, Lord Curzon, the British ruler of India then used the "Middle East," term to refer to Turkey, the Arab Gulf and Iran in Asia as a path leading to India.

As opposed to Mackinder's view, the U.S. Admiral Alfred Mahan had much extolled the influence of sea-powers in his famous book titled "The Influence of Sea-power Upon History," which was written in 1890. Mahan stresses the importance of the sea-power in the first chapter of the book titled "Discussion of the Elements of Sea Power." In this chapter, he talks about the geographical position, speaking highly of Britain's advantages over other European powers: "It may be pointed out, in the first place, that if a nation be so situated that it is neither forced to defend itself by land nor induced to seek extension of its territory by way of the land, it has, by the very unity of its aim directed upon the sea, an advantage as compared with a people one of whose boundaries is continental. This has been a great advantage to England over both France and Holland as a sea power. The strength of the latter was early exhausted by the necessity of keeping up a large army and carrying on expensive wars to preserve her independence while the policy of France was constantly diverted, sometimes

wisely and sometimes most foolishly, from the sea to projects of continental extension. These military efforts expended with wealth; whereas a wiser and consistent use of her geographical position would have added to it."

Mahan continues: "The geographical position may be such as of itself to promote a concentration, or to necessitate a dispersion, of the naval forces. Here again the British Islands have an advantage over France. The position of the latter, touching the Mediterranean as well as the ocean, while it has its advantages, is on the whole a source of military weakness at sea. The eastern and western French fleets have only been able to unite after passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, in attempting which they have often risked and sometimes suffered loss. The position of the United States upon the two oceans would be either a source of great weakness or a cause of enormous expense, had it a large sea commerce on both coasts."

Mahan further extols the advantages of Britain as a sea-power, noting: "The geographical position of a country may not only favor the concentration of its forces, but give the further, strategic advantage of a central position and a good base for hostile operations against its probable enemies. This again is the case with England; on the one hand she faces Holland and the northern powers, on the other France and the Atlantic. When threatened with a coalition between France and the naval powers of the North Sea and the Baltic, as she at times was, her fleets in the Downs and in the Channel, and even off Brest, occupied interior positions, and thus were readily able to interpose their united force against either

one of the enemies which should seek to pass through the Channel to effect a junction with its ally. On either side, also, Nature gave her better ports and a safer coast to approach." Mahan continues stressing the importance of technological advance to sea-power, noting that: "Formerly, this was a very serious element in the passage through the Channel but of late, steam and the improvement of her harbors have lessened the disadvantage under which France once labored. In the days of sailing-ships, the English fleet operated against Brest making its base at Torbay and Plymouth. The plan was simply: this in easterly or moderate weather the blockading fleet kept its position without difficulty but in westerly gales, when too severe, they bore up for English ports, knowing that the French fleet could not get out till the wind shifted, which equally served to bring them back to their station."

Again, Mahan praised British sea-power represented by Britain's easy access to high sea: "If, in addition to facility for offence, Nature has so placed a country that it has easy access to the high sea itself, while at the same time it controls one of the great thoroughfares or the world's traffic, it is evident that the strategic value of its position is very high. Such again is, and to a greater degree was, the position of England. The trade of Holland, Sweden, Russia, Denmark, and that which went up the great rivers to the interior of Germany, had to pass through the Channel close by her doors; for sailing-ships hugged the English coast. This northern trade had, moreover, a peculiar bearing upon sea power for naval stores, as they are commonly called, were mainly drawn from the Baltic countries."

Regarding the Middle East, the "Middle East" as a term was used to replace the "Ottomanic State," which filled up nearly the same area now taken up by the modern Middle East with the exception of Iran. The Ottomanic State was rightly called the "Sick Man of Europe," long before holding the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 and even before signing the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 between Britain and France on partitioning the Ottoman Empire.

In chapter titled "The Seaman's Point of View," in his book titled "Democratic Ideals and Reality, Mackinder stressed: "The Great War itself began in the old style, and it was not until 1917 that the new aspects of reality became evident. In the very first days of the struggle the British fleet had already taken command of the ocean, enveloping, with the assistance of the French fleet, the whole peninsular theater of the war on land. The German troops in the German colonies were isolated, German merchant shipping was driven off the seas, the British expeditionary force was transported across the Channel without the loss of a man or a horse, and British and French supplies from over the ocean were safely brought in." Mackinder went on to say: "On the Eastern front also the old style of war held. Land-power was there divided into two contending forces, and the outer of the two, notwithstanding its incongruous Czardom, was allied with the sea-power of the democratic West. In short, the disposition of forces repeated in a general way that of a century earlier, when British sea-power supported the Portuguese and Spaniards in "the Peninsula," and was allied with the autocracies of the Eastern land-powers. Napoleon fought on two fronts, which in the terms of to-

day we should describe as Western and Eastern." Mackinder continues noting: "In 1917, however, came a great change, due to the entry of the United States into the war, the fall of the Russian Czardom, and the subsequent collapse of the Russian fighting strength. The world strategy of the contest was entirely altered."

Then, Mackinder comes to the crucial point about his argument: "We have been fighting since, and can afford to say it without hurting any of our allies, to make the world a safe place for democracies. So much as regards idealism. But it is equally important that we bear in mind the new face of reality. We have been fighting lately, in the close of the war, a straight duel between land-power and sea-power, and sea-power has been laying siege to land-power. We have conquered, but had Germany she would have established her sea-power on a wider base than any in history, and in fact on the widest possible base. The joint continent of Europe, Asia, and Africa, is now effectively, and not merely theoretically, an island. Now and again, lest we forget, let us call it the World-Island in what follows."

Then, he stresses a fact long forgotten by world sea-powers: "One reason why the seamen did not long ago rise to the generalization implied in the expression 'World-Island,' is that they could not make the round voyage of it. An ice-cap, two thousand miles across, floats on the polar sea, with one edge aground on the shoals off the north of Asia. For the common purposes of navigation, therefore, the continent is not an island. The seaman of the last four centuries have treated it as a vast promontory stretching southward from a vague north, as

a mountain peak may rise out of the clouds from hidden foundations. Even in the last century, since the opening of the Suez Canal, the eastward voyage has still been round a promontory, though with the point at Singapore instead of Cape Town."

Then, he refers that: "This fact and its vastness have made men think of the Continent as though it differed from other islands in more than size. We speak of its parts as Europe, Asia, and Africa in precisely the same way that we speak of the parts of the ocean as Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian. In theory even the ancient Greeks regarded it an insular, yet they spoke of it as the 'World.' The school children of to-day are taught of it as the 'Old World,' in contrast with a certain pair of peninsulas which together constitute the 'New World.' Seamen speak of it merely as 'the Continent,' the continuous land."

Mackinder then starts to explain the World-Island concept: "Let us consider for a moment the proportions and relations of this newly realized Great Island. It is set as it were on the shoulder of the earth with reference to the North Pole. Measuring from Pole to Pole along the central meridian of Asia, we have first a thousand miles of ice-clad sea as far as the northern shore of Siberia, then five thousand miles of land to the southern point of India, and then seven thousand miles of sea to the Antarctic cap of ice-clad land. But measured along the meridian of the Bay of Bengal or of the Arabian Sea, Asia is only some three thousand five hundred miles across. From Paris to Vladivostok is six thousand miles, and from Paris to the Cape of Good Hope is a similar

distance; but these measurements are on a globe twenty-six thousand miles round. Were it not for the ice impediments of its circumnavigation, practical seamen would long ago have spoken of the Great Island by some such name, for it is only a little more than one-fifth as large as their ocean."

Then, Mackinder attempts to set the marine frontiers of this World-Island noting: "The World-Island ends in points northeastward and southeastward. On a clear day you can see from the northeastern headland across Bering Strait to the beginning of the long pair of peninsulas, each measuring about one twenty-sixth of the globe, which we call the Americas. Superficially there is no doubt a certain resemblance of symmetry in the Old and New Worlds; each consists of two peninsulas, Africa and Euro-Asia in the one case, and North and South America in the other. But there is no real likeness between them. The northern and northeastern shores of Africa for nearly four thousand miles are so intimately related with the opposite shores of Europe and Asia that the Sahara constitutes a far more effective break in social continuity than does the Mediterranean. In the days of air navigation which are coming, sea-power will use the waterway of the Mediterranean and Red Seas only by the sufferance of land-power, a new amphibious cavalry, when the contest with sea-power is in question."

Mackinder then points out what North and South Americas represent on the world map: "But North and South Americas, slenderly connected at Panama, are for practical purposes insular than peninsular in regard to one another. South America lies not merely to the south,

but also in the main to east of North America; the two lands are in echelon, as soldiers would say, and thus the broad ocean encircles South America, except for a minute proportion of its outline. A like fact is true of North America with reference to Asia, for it stretches out into the ocean from Bering Strait so that, as may be seen upon a globe, the shorts way from Pekin to New York is across Bering Strait, a circumstance which may someday have importance for the traveler by railway or air. The third of the new continents, Australia, lies a thousand miles from the southeastern point of Asia, and measures only one fifth of the surface of the globe." He continues stressing the World-Island concept: "Thus, the three so-called new continents are in point of area merely satellites of the old continent. There is one ocean covering the nine-twelfths of the globe; there is one continent-the World-Island-covering two twelfths of the globe; and there are many smaller islands."

In their book titled: "A Concise History of the Middle East," written in 2020 by authors Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davidson point out advantages of the Middle East location, noting that: "The Middle East is the natural crossroads of the Afro-Eurasian landmass. It is also the 'land of the seven seas.' It lies athwart the water route from southern Ukraine to the Mediterranean, via the Black Sea, the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, the Dardanelles, and the Aegean Sea. In various eras an area between the Nile Delta and the Sinai Peninsula has been adapted to facilitate shipping between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, which in turn has served as a highway to Asia and East Africa." The authors continue: "Ever since the taming of the one-humped camel around 3000

BCE, men and women have crossed the deserts with their merchandise, flocks, and household goods. Even the high mountains of Anatolia and Persia did not bar passage to people with horses, donkeys, or two-humped camel. Invaders and traders have entered the Middle East from Central Asia, Europe, and Africa since prehistoric times. Rarely in the past 4,000 years have Middle Eastern peoples known any respite from outside pressures or influences." Then, the authors compare these Mideast historical conditions to other regions of the world: "Consider what this accessibility means for the Middle East, compared with some other parts of the world. Chinese civilization developed in relative isolation; invading 'barbarians' were first tamed and then absorbed into China's political system. British subjects lived for centuries in what they smugly called 'splendid isolation' and viewed foreign affairs as 'something, usually unpleasant, that happens to someone else.' The US long saw itself separate from the outside world."

As for the Middle East as a modern term, when describing the Versailles Conference in 1919, David Fromkin had aptly chosen the title of his book "A Peace to End All Peace, The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East." Fromkin had quoted Archibald Wavell (later Field Marshal Earl Wavell), an officer who served under Allenby in the Palestine campaign. In his commenting on the treaties bringing the First World War to an end, Wavell said: "After 'the war to end war' they seem to have been pretty successful in Paris at making a 'Peace to end Peace.'"

According to David Fromkin, the Sykes–Picot Agreement officially known as the Asia Minor Agreement, was a secret agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the French Third Republic, with the assent of the Russian Empire, defining their proposed spheres of influence and control in Southwestern Asia should the Triple Entente succeed in defeating the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement provided for the French control of the south of Anatolia including Adana and Iskenderun and England's domination of Iraq including the principalities of Basra and Baghdad, parts of southern Levant to the eastern borders of Sinai Peninsula and Haifa and Acre. The agreement also stipulated establishing an international administration for Palestine and dividing up the Arab desert area buffering Iran and Levant into two spheres of influence, one British and another French. Then, fate of the Ottomanic State was finally sealed with Kemal Ataturk's declaration of the abolition of the Ottomanic Caliphate in 1924.

Prior to 1924, David Fromkin talks in a chapter titled "The settlement of the Middle Eastern Question," in part seven of the same above-mentioned book that: "For at least a century before the 1914 war, Europeans had regarded it as axiomatic that someday the Middle East would be occupied by one or more of the Great Powers. Their great fear was that disputes about their respective shares might lead the European powers to fight ruinous wars against one another."

Fromkin continues: "For the government of Britain, therefore, the settlements arrived at by 1922 were doubly

crowning achievements. Britain had won a far larger share of the Middle East (and Britain's rival, Russia, a much smaller one) than had seemed possible beforehand; but even more important, the powers seemed prepared to accept the territorial division that had emerged in the early 1920s without further recourse to arms."

Fromkin then notes: "Thus the troubling and potentially explosive Middle Eastern Question, as it had existed in world politics since the time of Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition, was successfully settled by the postwar arrangements arrived at by 1922. A major issue that had been at stake was where Russia's political frontier in the Middle East would be drawn. By 1922 the question was solved; the Russian frontier was finally drawn to run with a northern tier of states that stretched from Turkey to Iran to Afghanistan - countries that maneuvered to remain independent from both of Russia and the West, along a line that continued to hold firm for decades."

Fromkin added: "The other great issue at stake since Napoleonic times had been what would eventually become of the Ottoman Empire – an issue that was resolved in 1922 by the termination of the Ottoman Sultanate and the partition of its Middle Eastern domains between Turkey, France, and Britain. Such was the settlement of 1922."

Fromkin further explains: "The settlement of 1922 was not a single act or agreement or document; rather, it was the design that emerged from many separate acts and agreements and documents that date mostly from that year." He proceeds to mention how: "Russia's territorial frontier in the Middle East was established by the draft

constitution of the U.S.S.R. promulgated at the end of 1922, while her political frontier emerged from the treaties she signed with Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan, and, to some extent, from the trade agreement she signed with Britain in 1921." He stresses that: "The deposing of the Ottoman Sultan and the establishment of a Turkish national state, which was confined to the Turkish-speaking portion of the dissolved empire, were effected by unanimous votes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 1 and 2 November 1922. Turkey's eventual frontiers in large part grew out of the armistice she signed with the Allies in the autumn of 1922, followed by a peace treaty with the Allies signed at the Swiss city of Lausanne the following year."

As for the rest of Ottoman Empire, Fromkin said: "The rest of the former Ottoman domains in the Middle East were partitioned between Britain and France by such documents as France's League of Nations Mandate to rule Syria and Lebanon (1922), Britain's League of Nations Mandate to rule Palestine including Transjordan (1922), and the treaty of 1922 with Iraq which Britain intended to serve as an affirmation of a Mandate to rule that newly created country."

Then, Fromkin goes on to note a list of key events that took place in the Middle East in 1922, noting: "Within her own sphere of influence in the Middle East, Britain made her dispositions in acts and documents that also, for the most part, date from 1922. She placed Fuad 1 on the throne of Egypt in that year, and made Egypt a nominally independent protectorate by the terms of the Allenby Declaration of 1922. She established a

protectorate in Iraq by her treaty that year with that country: a country she had created and upon whose throne she had placed her own nominee, Feisal. By the terms of the Palestine Mandate of 1922 and Churchill's White Paper for Palestine in 1922, Transjordan was set on the road to a political existence separate from that of Palestine – Abdullah, appointed by Britain, was to permanently preside over the new entity by a decision made in 1922 – while west of the Jordan, Jews were promised a National Home and non-Jews were promised full rights. Independence or autonomy for the Kurds, which had been on the agenda in 1921, somehow disappeared from the agenda in 1922, so there was to be no Kurdistan: it was a non-decision of 1922 that was, in effect, a decision." Fromkin also mentioned that in 1922, too, Britain imposed frontier agreements that resulted in the establishment of boundaries between Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait.

Fromkin continues: "Thus Britain – like France in her sphere of the Middle East, and Russia in hers – established states, appointed persons to govern them, and drew frontiers between them; and did so mostly in and around 1922. As they had long intended to do, the European powers had taken the political destinies of the Middle Eastern peoples in their hands – and they did so by the terms of what I have called the settlement of 1922."

Fromkin infers from the above-mentioned home truths that: "The long-expected European imperial adventure in the Middle East had therefore begun too late; Europeans could no longer pursue it either with adequate resources

or with a whole heart. Europe itself, its antebellum world swept away in the cataclysm of 1914-18, was changing more rapidly in weeks or months than it had before in decades or centuries, and to a growing number of Europeans, imperialism seemed out of place in the modern age." He asserts that: "In the first years of the war it had still sounded acceptable openly to avow an intention to annex new colonies; but as Wilson's America and Lenin's Russia, with their anti-imperialist rhetoric, challenged old Europe, minds and political vocabularies began to change. Sir Mark Sykes, ever sensitive to shifts in the current of opinion, recognized in 1917 that the imperial concepts he and Picot had employed only a year before in their Middle East pact already belonged to a bygone era."

In a book titled: "A History of the Modern Middle East," in 2009 by William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, the authors make clear in a chapter titled "World War and the End of the Ottoman Order," that: "In 1915, when Russian armies were being battered by the Ottomans in eastern Anatolia and by the Germans in Poland, Britain and France became concerned that Russia's willingness to pursue the war might evaporate. They therefore decided to offer the czar the most desirable 'advance booking' possible. In what would have been an unthinkable proposition at any time before the war, Britain, France, and Russia signed the Constantinople Agreement in March in 1915 awarding Russia the right to annex Istanbul and the Turkish Straits. The Constantinople Agreement was never implemented, and it was no doubt with some relief that Britain and France received Lenin's statement following the Russian

Revolution in 1917 that the Bolshevik government was renouncing the czarist regime's previous treaties with the Allies."

The authors continue: "By far the most vexing interallied Middle Eastern issue was the constant tension between Britain and France over France's claims to Ottoman Syria. As France was bearing the brunt of the horrible trench warfare on the western front, it was unable to directly protect its Middle Eastern interests and viewed with alarm Britain's growing military involvement in the region. To resolve this matter, negotiators from the two countries drew up a secret treaty in May 1916 in which they divided up most of the Arab Middle East between them. Known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the treaty is one of the most controversial documents of the war, for it appeared to contravene portions of the pledge that Britain had given to Sharif Husayn."

The authors dwelt on this agreement pointing out that: "The agreement recognized long-standing French claims to Syria by awarding France a large zone of 'direct control' stretching along the Syrian coast from southern Lebanon into Anatolia. In addition, France was granted a sphere of exclusive indirect influence in the Syrian interior. The British position in Iraq was similarly guaranteed; Britain gained the right to exercise 'direct control' over the southern portion of Mesopotamia and was granted a huge zone of exclusive indirect influence stretching from Gaza to Kirkuk. The independent Arab state promised to Husayn was, in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, designated as a state or confederation of states lying in the two zones of British and French

indirect influence. Under the terms of the agreement, Palestine was to be placed under international administration."

The authors also pointed out that: "Finally, Great Britain made yet another 'advance booking' for yet another interested party. In an effort to appeal to US, Russian, and German Jewry and also to secure control over the territory adjacent to the Suez Canal, Britain agreed to favor the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. This agreement – the famous Balfour Declaration of November 1917 – was conveyed in a letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, a prominent British Zionist. If the British pledge to support, however indirectly, Jewish settlement in Palestine was to be implemented, Britain would have to remain in occupation of Palestine. In Arab eyes, any such action would constitute a violation of the promise made to Husayn."

Finally, the authors concluded: "When the war ended, most Ottoman territory had been pledged to one or another of the Allied partners. Since some of the pledged contradicted one another, they could be implemented only by compromise or the exercise of armed force."

The Middle East as a term used in this article refers to the region from Egypt in the west through Iran in the east, and from Turkey in the north to the Arabian Peninsula in the South. Although there is not a single agreed-upon definition for the "Middle East," term, there is a correspondence among these various definitions that the real "Middle East," is what is called the "Core States," namely, "those countries extending from Egypt

to the Arab Gulf and from Turkey and Iran to the Indian Ocean." As for these countries where there are divergent views on including or excluding them from the Middle East region, these countries are known as the "Periphery States." Accordingly, this article will abide by the most common definition of the Middle East region, namely "this region extending from Egypt to the Arab Gulf and from Turkey and Iran to the Indian Ocean."

The Middle East has always been throughout history a world of trilateral-polar political system made up of Egypt, Turkey and Iran. Moreover, all these three countries were and still are amphibious powers in terms of Mackinder's theory of heartland. Thus domination of the Middle East has changed hands among those three amphibious powers throughout various intervals of history.

However, following the end of the World War II, this well-established system began to disappear and was replaced with a world of five-polar system. The two new powers or elements which were thrown into the old equation were the establishment in Israel in 1948 and the discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf region.

Further, the more dynamic element in this neo-geopolitical game is that these two new powers are also amphibious powers, though in the case of the oil-rich Arab Gulf states, they did not make full use of their littoral location yet.

However, these two new powers did not start playing their hands into the Mideast affairs except after some long time. In case of Israel, it took about thirty one years

to be recognized by the biggest Arab country Egypt and to sign a peace treaty with her in 1979.

As for the oil-rich Arab Gulf states, they started to play a key role on the Mideast scene in the wake of the Arab Spring Revolutions that erupted in 2011. It was such epoch-making events that debunked the fragility of the old well-established Arab revolutionary regimes. Accordingly, it took about sixty five years following the World War II until the Saudi-led oil-rich Arab Gulf states surfaced as a key regional player on the Mideast scene.

In 2016, the Saudi foreign policy started to adopt a more stern position in the face of Tehran's expansionist ambitions. Moreover, the Saudi leadership selected young members of the Saudi elite to hold prominent posts in the state apparatus. This became also apparent in the military operation titled "The Storm of Resolve," that is being currently carried out by the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states against the Shiite Houthis in Yemen who enjoy the support of Iran.

Consequently, there is an interval of about thirty four years spanning the rise of Israel as a regional power on the Middle East scene and the rise of the oil-rich Arab Gulf states on the same scene. Now and as the two new powers have both shown their full capabilities, it will be interesting to follow up how they will interact with the well-established other regional powers.

Regarding Israel, it has guaranteed now peaceful ties with two powers of the old trilateral-polar system, namely Egypt and Turkey. Concerning Turkey, it is

already a NATO member and so Israel found no hardship in establishing a robust relationship with it. Though the Turkish-Israeli relationship had been shaken by Israel's attacking of Gaza's Freedom Flotilla Convoy in 2010, Turkey resumed its cooperative ties with Israel in 2016.

As for Egypt and though the peace between Cairo and Tel Aviv is often called a "cold peace," Israel could guarantee through this type of peace the security of its southern borders through signing a peace treaty with Cairo. Thus, it remains to Israel to establish peace with an old political pole in the Middle East, namely Iran, and it also needs to forge ties with a new political pole, namely the oil-rich Arab Gulf states. However, it will be too hard for Israel to reach peace with these two powers in particular.

In case of the Saudi-led oil-rich Arab Gulf states, these states categorically reject establishing peace with Israel so long as the Palestinian Cause has not been resolved in what includes the restoration of Jerusalem with its Aqsa Mosque as it is one of the three Holiest Mosques in Islam. In case of Iran's prospective relationship with Israel, Tehran often voices its objection to Israel's mere existence in the Middle East, while there are close relationships between some Palestinian resistance factions and the Iranian-backed Islamist faction Hezbollah.

Back to the Theory of Heartland, it could be easily inferred from the Mideast map that the heartland of the Middle East has been always the Arabian Peninsula. The Arabian Peninsula played such a key role in determining the Mideast destinies with the advent of Islam.

Afterwards, the headquarters of Caliphate, or the political center of Islam, had moved to Damascus, then Baghdad followed by Cairo, and then Istanbul and the Arabian Peninsula remained throughout this period a dormant political center until the oil was extracted from it following the end of the World War II. As for what Mackinder calls the "World-Island," it could be applied in this article to Mideast landmass as compared to the Arabian Peninsula.

However, what is really lacking the military thought in the oil-rich Arab Gulf states is that the Arab Gulf as an amphibious power did not build up till now a robust fleet equal in magnitude to the sea power of the old trilateral poles of the Middle East, namely Egypt, Turkey and Iran. Once this colossal fleet is built by the oil-rich Arab Gulf states, then they will be capable of dominating the Middle East en masse.

In his book titled: "Democratic Ideals and Reality," which was first published in 1919, Sir Halford Mackinder wrote in chapters three and four respectively about "The Seaman's Point of View," and "The Landsman's Point of View." It is well-known that Mackinder was biased with the landsman's point of view and upon this view he based his famous Theory of the Heartland. When dwelling upon the location of Arabia, Mackinder said: "Between the Sahara and the Heartland there is a broad gap which is occupied by Arabia. The two brinks of the Nile Valley are known as Libyan to the west and Arabian to the east; and away beyond the Lower Euphrates, at the foot of the Persian Mountains, is

the district known as Arabistan or the country of the Arabs."

Mackinder continues describing the Arabia's location: "In complete harmony, therefore, with local usage, Arabia may be regarded as spreading for eight hundred miles from the Nile to beyond the Euphrates. From the foot of the Taurus Mountains, north of Aleppo, to the Gulf of Aden, it measures no less than eighteen hundred miles. As to one-half, Arabia is desert, and as to the other half mainly dry steppes; although it lies in the same latitudes as the Sahara, it is more productive and carries a more considerable population of wandering Bedouin. Moreover, it has larger oases, and therefore larger cities. What, however, most distinguishes Arabia both from the Heartland and the Sahara is the fact that it is traversed by three waterways in connection with the ocean – the Nile, the Red Sea, and the Euphrates and Persian Gulf. None of these three ways, however, affords naturally a complete passage across the arid belt."

Mackinder concludes from the above-mentioned geographical analysis: "It follows from the foregoing description that the Heartland, Arabia, and the Sahara together constitute a broad, curving belt inaccessible to seafaring people, except by the three Arabian waterways. This belt extends completely across the great continent from the Arctic to the Atlantic shores. In Arabia it touches the Indian Ocean, and, as a consequence, divides the remainder of the Continent into three separate regions whose rivers flow to the ice-free ocean." Mackinder finally infers: "There regions are the Pacific and Indian slopes of Asia; the peninsulas and islands of Europe and

the Mediterranean; and the great promontory of Africa south of the Sahara."

Finally, Mackinder put his three propositions regarding the world dominion as following:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:

Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:

Who rules the World-Island commands the World.

In a chapter titled "The Rise and Expansion of Islam," of the above-mentioned book titled: "A History of the Modern Middle East," the authors refer to the significance of Arabia as the cradle land of Islam: "Notwithstanding the divisions inherent in the tribal structure of pre-Islamic Arabia, forces of cultural unity were present. The Bedouin ethos of bravery and honor was celebrated in a special style of Arabic poetry known as a qasidah. The existence of this poetry, which was recited at market fairs and tribal gatherings, has convinced historians that the Arabs of the seventh century possessed a common poetic language that could be understood in different regions of the peninsula. This was of the utmost significance for the spread of Islam because it meant that the Prophet Muhammad's religious message could be communicated to Arabic speakers across a broad expanse of territory."

The authors continue: "Isolated though it was, the Arabian Peninsula was not completely cut off from the forces that shaped Middle East civilization. On the eve of the rise of Islam, two Arab tribal confederations guarded the northern Arabian frontiers as client states of Byzantium and the Sasanians, respectively. Both of these Arab confederations were Christians, providing evidence

of the spread of the concept of monotheism among the Arabs before the time of Muhammad."

The authors further made clear that: "At the southwestern tip of Arabia, Yemen was another source for the entry of external influences into the peninsula. Unlike the rest of Arabia, Yemen was a fertile and well-watered region able to support a settled agricultural society."

As for the significance of the Arabia itself, the authors said: "During the two centuries before Islam, Arabia acquired increasing importance as a commercial transit route between the Middle Eastern empires and Yemen. The wars between Byzantium and the Sasanians disrupted the east-west routes and gave rise to a brisk north-south caravan trade through the Hijaz, Arabia's coastal plain adjacent to the Red Sea. The main Arabian beneficiary of this commercial network was the city of Mecca, which developed into the most important commercial center of the peninsula. By the early seventh century, Meccan merchants had accumulated sufficient capital to organize their own caravans and to provide payments to an extensive network of tribes in exchange for pledges to allow the caravans to pass in peace."

The authors further elaborated: "In addition to its role as a commercial center, Mecca was a religious site of major significance. The city's shrine, the Ka'ba, became the center of an animistic cult that attracted worshipers throughout western Arabia. By the time of Muhammad's birth, the Ka'ba had become the site of an annual pilgrimage during which warfare was suspended, and Mecca's sanctuary became a kind of neutral ground where tribal disputes could be resolved. The city derived considerable income from its religious role, and its leading families recognized the importance of the sanctuary as a source of wealth and influence."

Regarding the social organization in Mecca then, the authors said: "The leading clans of Mecca were all members of the Quraysh tribe that settled the city, established its religious role, and dominated its political and commercial life. Although formal municipal organizations did not exist, the affairs of the city were loosely regulated by a council of prominent Quraysh merchants. Historians have suggested that Mecca was in a state of transition between the vanishing tribal ways and a nascent urbanism spawned by merchant capitalism. The customary tribal values were being displaced, but no fully developed set of communal values suitable for an urban setting had yet emerged."

However, at the era of Halford Mackinder the Arabian Peninsula was such arid heartland backed up with only scanty resources as the oil was not discovered yet. This is the cause behind Mackinder's discernment of the Arabian Peninsula as a dormant heartland of the Middle East region.

Thus along the parallel lines of the Heartland Theory, the following three propositions could be deduced about the Middle East region:

Who rules the Arabian Peninsula commands the Mideast Heartland:

Who rules the Mideast Heartland commands the Mideast Island:

Who rules the Mideast Island commands the Middle East itself.

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